

Sickle Cell Disease

What is a positive newborn screen?

Newborn screening is done on tiny samples of blood taken from your baby's heel 24 to 36 hours after birth. The blood is tested for rare, but serious disorders that may affect your baby's health and development. When disorders are found, early treatment may help prevent serious problems for your baby.

Newborn screening tests for sickle cell disease among many other conditions. A positive newborn screen means your baby likely has sickle cell disease and needs more testing to know for sure.

You will be notified by your primary care provider or the newborn screening program to arrange for additional testing.

What is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease is a disorder that affects red blood cells. It causes blood cells to become hard and shaped like a sickle (a shape like the letter "c"). This decreases delivery of oxygen to cells in the body. Sickle cell disease can cause a variety of health problems.

Sickle cell disease is a genetic disorder that is inherited from parents who have sickle cell trait. It is one of the most common inherited blood disorders in the United States.

Sickle cell disease affects people around the world, and is most common in people whose ancestors come from parts of Africa, Middle East, Southern Europe (Mediterranean countries), India, South America, Central America, and parts of the Caribbean.

What problems can sickle cell disease cause?

Babies and young children with sickle cell disease are at higher risk for infections and fever. Complications from sickle cell disease vary from child to child and can be mild or severe.

A child might develop:

- Infections
- Stroke
- Eye disease
- Severe pain episodes

It is very important to follow the doctor's instructions for testing and treatment to lower the risk of problems.

What is the treatment for sickle cell disease?

There are available treatments to help control symptoms, complications, and pain. Treatment options are life-long and varies from person to person depending on the symptoms.

Treatments can include:

- Pain medications and fluids
- Hydroxyurea (a medication)
- Blood transfusions
- Antibiotics to prevent infection
- Immunizations
- Medicated creams and ointments

Children with sickle cell disease should see their regular doctor and a doctor who specializes in sickle cell disease.

Doctors who specialize in treating blood disorders and patients with sickle cell disease are called 'Hematologist'.

Michigan Resources and Support

Michigan Newborn Screening
Nurse Consultant
Toll-free: 1-(866)-673-9939
newbornscreening@michigan.gov

Sickle Cell Disease Association- Michigan Chapter
Toll-free: 1-(800)-421-8453
www.sicklecelldisease.org